

Hidden architectural contexts: Research Project

Student Volunteer Research Placements

About The Stained Glass Museum

The Stained Glass Museum's collection spans more than 800 years, from the medieval period to the present day. Founded in 1972, the museum's core collection comprises stained glass panels and windows predominantly rescued from redundant churches in the 1970s and 80s. Many of these church buildings have been demolished, others remain and have been repurposed for other use.

Over 125 panels of illuminated stained glass are displayed in our gallery within the South Triforium of Ely Cathedral, with examples from across the UK, Europe and further afield. Many of these are parts of larger windows and schemes.

The museum is supported by a small team of staff including our Director and Curator, Dr Jasmine Allen, who is supported by a small team including our Learning Officer (P/T) and our Collections Engagement Officer (P/T), alongside a small front of house team. The team are passionate about our museum and sharing our unique collection with the public.



Our visitors come from all over the world and are a mixture of subject specialists, local families and people on day trips. Because our collection of stained glass has such a large geographic reach and wide appeal, the collection is interesting to visitors in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons.

What have we done so far?

Every stained glass panel and window in the museum has a unique accession number, and associated object file with varying levels of information. Over the years, as time, projects and researchers have allowed, research has been carried out into the original architectural contexts of these windows and the fate of the buildings. We know this is of particular interest to our audiences, and also future research into the collection, feeding directly into our interpretation, so we are keen to continue to update our information and develop our understanding of these contexts.



In the spring of 2021, a public online lecture was given by our Curator & Collections Engagement Officer which focused on some of the research already carried out. A recording of this lecture can be viewed here on the museum's YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/xWw4uy8HUf0s>

Several years ago, an interactive collections map was made to highlight the location of our panels, including basic information on how the building had been demolished, made redundant or given a new use. The map, and an updated online collections search can be viewed here: <https://stainedglassmuseum.com/collectionssearch.php>

During the summer of 2021, 11 virtual volunteers joined us to research the architectural contexts of some of our panels. Following an initial zoom meeting, each person was assigned a panel to research and provided with all the information we already had. From there, they researched their panel during the summer before coming together again in early autumn to present their research to the rest of the group. The information they gathered was then added to our archive and will feed into future interpretation displayed within the museum

Architectural Contexts Research

We are recruiting student volunteers with existing knowledge of stained glass and the necessary research skills to help us explore the architectural contexts of a number of 19th and 20th century windows in our collection further on a short-term placement this year.

The project will allow students to utilise and develop their existing research and skills whilst contributing directly to research into our unique stained glass collection and consequentially our understanding and interpretation of it.

We are looking to check and update existing records on the history and fate of these buildings and contribute new information on how our 'rescued' windows related to these building, their use (liturgical or other) and other interior fittings and furnishings, and also their connections to the people and communities who made, commissioned or are commemorated by them.

Your research will be carried out in your own time. There are a number of fascinating stories to uncover and tell.

We ask that:

- Your research should be completed using a range of primary and secondary sources, where appropriate, making use of a growing number of digitised resources and archives.
- We encourage you to seek a wide variety of sources, which might include plans, drawings and photographs of the original building, contemporary



commentary from newspapers or reports, information related to those involved which might include obituaries, newspaper reports and pamphlets.

- All research sources are properly referenced in your preferred style, where possible copies of key primary sources (e.g. a newspaper article on the consecration of a building).
- Where images are referenced and copies provided, the source and copyright holder (if known) is stated.
- We encourage you to highlight findings of particular interest with regard to the history of people and places, subjects and techniques.
- Your research should consider the reason this artist or piece of work was commissioned, its position within the building, any dedications, and the reason the status of the building may have changed. If the building remains standing, please also consider the variety of uses it has had since deconsecration as this may have also changed over time.
- Your research may also focus on the artist or studio too. Was this piece typical for the artist or did it represent a change in style. Is there any evidence as to why this artist was commissioned? Or why this subject or style was chosen?
- Ensure your research allows us to update and correct existing museum catalogue and supporting information about the architectural context where necessary.

What you can expect from The Stained Glass Museum:

- The opportunity to develop your research skills and knowledge. Particularly of archival, collections-based research.
- We will select a panel or panels for you to research which will take into your account the museum's needs, and your personal interests where possible. We will arrange virtual meetings with other researchers on the project and museum staff at the beginning and end of the project to launch, share and discuss your findings. We will provide additional 1-to-1 support where needed.
- Access to the collections information at the museum. We will provide access to our basic catalogue information, object files and any research already completed on your selected panel/window. We ask that you keep this object file in confidence as it may contain sensitive and/or confidential information not available to the public.
- The opportunity to write for different audiences and consider ways of interpreting your findings to the public.



THE STAINED GLASS MUSEUM

- We will provide references from the museum to use in future volunteer or job applications if requested.
- Whilst we appreciate many of our researchers may not live near the museum in Ely, Cambridgeshire, if you are able to visit, as with our in-person volunteers you are entitled to free museum entry and a 10% discount in our shop whilst you are volunteering with us. Please do let us know if you are able to visit, we'd love to show you round!
- If you are able to visit the museum in person, you are welcome to visit our collections store and library as well as other behind the scenes areas.

Rough Timeframe

Deadline for Expression of interest: midday, 5 June 2022

Initial meeting with SGM team: Wednesday 29 June 2022 (Zoom, evening)

Research to be agreed: early July 2022

undertaken: July-September

Progress meetings (1-to1 / group) TBA

Sharing of results: September 2022

Deadline and dissemination: TBA

How to get involved

Send an initial expression of interest, outlining any particular areas of interest and a short CV to curator@stainedglassmuseum.com by midday, 5 June 2022